Texts with Metadiscourse Features are More Engaging: A Fact or A Myth?

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ABSTRACT

Metadiscourse is a pragmatic linguistic device that writers use to engage with their readers. For decades, research on metadiscourse has mostly centred on academic texts. There were also attempts to examine its use in editorials. However, in this study, attempts are made to investigate the readers' responses on the use and non-use of metadiscourse in online business news. To gain insights on this objective, thirty participants from a local public university in Malaysia participated in the study. The findings showed that most of the participants preferred to read news with textual metadiscourse because it was clearer, while 16.67% of the participants preferred to read news without textual metadiscourse. The findings also revealed that 93.33% of the participants preferred to read news with interpersonal metadiscourse because it was more engaging, while only 6.67% of the participants preferred to read news without interpersonal metadiscourse. The findings revealed the importance of metadiscourse in business news writings, and as such, texts constructed with and without the presence of metadiscourse could be useful teaching resources for writing instructors in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) writing classrooms.

Keywords: online business news; textual metadiscourse; interpersonal metadiscourse; pragmatic linguistic device; teaching resource

INTRODUCTION

Business news should facilitate informed engagement with the public on important issues such as economic and financial progress (Doyle, 2006). However, it has been observed that generally, readers do not like to read business news because it is not engaging to them. This lack of engagement may result from writers' lacking knowledge on how to report news clearly in an interactive manner (Hewitt, 2002). Research in writing has proven that successful writings are normally engaging texts. One of the many means to engage readers in a text is through the appropriate use of metadiscourse. Metadiscourse is a pragmatic linguistic device that writers use to organise their texts, reveal their attitudes towards the propositions of the texts and at the same time, demonstrate solidarity with the readers (Hyland, 2005).

The notion that metadiscourse is a pragmatic linguistic device can be viewed through the lens of the social constructionist theory. The theory as propounded by Berger and Luckmann (1966) views knowledge construction as a social act, and writing is seen as meaning construction, which can also be viewed as a social activity (Hyland, 2005). Therefore, both the writers and the readers play important roles in the meaning construction of writing, particularly in the writing of business news. For meaning making to be effective in writing, it is pertinent that metadiscourse features are used by the writers (Mencher, 2011). Their importance in writing has also been highlighted by Hyland (2005), where he emphasised that the use of appropriate metadiscourse features allows writers to articulate meaning in texts so that it is understood and interpreted accurately by the readers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the past decades, numerous studies (Hyland, 2005; Hyland & Tse, 2014; Musa, Supyan, & Imran, 2019) have shown the efficacy of using metadiscourse in writing. Their results revealed that the judicious use of metadiscourse enhances comprehension of written texts, particularly academic texts. Though studies on metadiscourse abound in texts in the academic setting, this cannot be said of business news.

Literature on metadiscourse in news writing, particularly business news texts, has not received much attention from researchers (Hewitt, 2002; Hudson & Rowlands, 2012). So far, studies on metadiscourse that focused on news were on general newspaper discourse but not specifically on business news. Dafouz-Milne (2008), in her study on editorials, revealed that a balanced number of both textual and interpersonal markers was necessary to render a text persuasive and reader-oriented. In Noorian and Biria's (2010) study on how interpersonal metadiscourse markers were used in persuasive writing of opinion articles in two elite newspapers, the findings showed that metadiscourse played a key role in persuasive writing and that it was an important feature of professional rhetorical writing in the Persian language. Kuhi and Mojood's (2014) study on newspaper editorials suggested that metadiscourse has a decisive role in the construction of persuasion in newspaper editorials. This notion concurs with Bedu's (2019) findings, which confirmed that the use of metadiscourse in editorial texts is vital to influencing the readers' understanding of the text.

Apart from the lack of studies on metadiscourse in business news, Canado and Esteban (2005) also mentioned that university students are generally not taught how to use metadiscourse features in their writings. This notion was further confirmed by Chung (2007) as well as Hudson and Rowlands (2012), whose findings indicated that there were not enough examples and references on metadiscourse in textbooks on the writing of business news. Similarly, Roush (2006) found that many textbooks only had brief sections on the use of metadiscourse, while the rest of the books were devoted to reporting and writing about the finance industry, the economy, markets and other business-related issues. Therefore, learners do not have enough exposure or knowledge to use appropriate metadiscourse in their writing of business news.

Additionally, there are not many studies that investigated the readers' response to texts with metadiscourse. Camiciottoli (2003), in her exploratory classroom study on the effect of metadiscourse on ESP reading comprehension, showed that appropriate use of metadiscourse in a text led to a higher level of students' comprehension of the reading text. Furthermore, Rodway's (2018) study on metadiscourse use in dialogic feedback practice indicated that the use of metadiscourse in the feedback reflected the interactivity of argumentation between the writer and readers. As texts are written to be read and as the studies above have shown that successful texts usually contain appropriate use of metadiscourse, it is interesting to examine

the response of readers to texts that have metadiscourse and those without metadiscourse. Thus, this paper, which is different from previous studies on metadiscourse, aims to investigate the readers' response to the use of metadiscourse features in business news from *The Star Online* and *Focus Malaysia*. To realise the objective of the study, a research question was framed to guide the study. The research question is "Is a text with metadiscourse more engaging than a text without metadiscourse?"

METHODOLOGY

PARTICIPANTS

The participants of this mixed-method study consisted of 30 English-major students at a public university in Malaysia. The 30 students were selected from an intact group enrolled in the Corpus Studies in Language Learning course at a local university in Malaysia. For ease of analysis of the data, each participant was coded as Student. Therefore, the 30 participants were coded as Student 1 to Student 30.

SAMPLES

The samples of this study comprised business news selected from two prominent web portals in Malaysia: *The Star Online* and *Focus Malaysia.* The selected news for the study was current news, such as the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) news, which was taken from *The Star Online,* July 2018 issue, and the news on new policies needed for the workplace was taken from *Focus Malaysia,* May 2017 issue. Letters of permission were written to the management boards of *The Star Online* and *Focus Malaysia* to obtain their consent to use the news for the purpose of research.

For the 1MDB news, textual metadiscourse features were removed and the text was coded as News 1, while the unmodified news was coded as News 2. Similarly, for the news regarding the new policies for the workplace, the interpersonal metadiscourse features were removed, and the samples were coded as News 3. The original text with interpersonal metadiscourse was coded as News 4. News 1 to News 4 can be seen in the Appendix.

Apart from the four news sample groups above, writing prompts were constructed to elicit responses from the participants on their engagement with the four texts. Such writing prompts have been used in previous studies by Platt (2016) and Tindal (2017) to stimulate the cognitive processes of their subjects. Therefore, prompts were used in this study to elicit the participants' responses to the business news. The writing prompts were constructed based on the adaptation of Dafouz-Milne's (2008) metadiscourse model. For the writing prompts, the participants were asked which text they preferred: the text with metadiscourse or without metadiscourse. Besides giving their preferences, the participants had to give reasons for their preferences by identifying the language features that made the texts engaging to them.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

It must be noted that the current study forms a small part of a larger study in which Dafouz-Milne's (2008) metadiscourse model was used as an initial framework. Dafouz-Milne's (2008) metadiscourse model consists of two main dimensions: textual and interpersonal. Under the textual dimension, there are seven categories: *logical markers*, *sequencers*, *reminders*, *topicalisers*, *code glosses*, *illocutionary markers*, and *announcements*. On the other hand, the interpersonal dimension contains five categories: *hedges*, *certainty markers*, *attributors*, *attitude markers*, and *commentaries*. However, the pilot study that was carried out revealed that business news largely did not have reminders and illocutionary markers. As a result, these

two categories were removed and the revised framework has a total of ten metadiscourse categories. Under textual metadiscourse, the five categories consist of *logical markers*, *sequencers*, *topicalisers*, *code glosses*, and *announcements*, while the interpersonal metadiscourse consisted of *hedges*, *boosters*, *attributors*, *attitude markers*, and *commentaries*. Table 1 illustrates the metadiscourse categories and some examples of linguistic realisations of Dafouz-Milne's (2008) revised metadiscourse model.

TABLE 1. Revised Dafouz-Milne's (2008) metadiscourse model

Textual Metadiscourse	
Categories	Examples
Logical markers	
- Additives	and, furthermore
- Adversatives	however
- Consecutives	therefore
- Conclusives	finally
Sequencers	first, second
Topicalisers	in political terms, in the case of the NHS
Code glosses	
- Punctuation devices	when (as with the Tories now)
	Tax evasion: it is deplored in others, but not in oneself.
- Reformulators	in other words, that is, to put it simply
- Exemplifiers	for example, for instance
Announcements	there are many good reasons
Interpersonal Metadiscourse	
Categories	Examples
Hedges	
- Epistemic verbs	may, might
- Probability	probably, perhaps
- Epistemic expression	it is likely
Certainty markers	undoubtedly, clearly
Attributors	X claims that
Attitude markers	
- Deontic verbs	have to
- Attitudinal adverbs	unfortunately, undoubtedly
- Attitudinal adjectives	it is absurd, it is surprising
- Cognitive verbs	I feel, I think
Commentaries	
- Rhetorical questions	What is the future of Europe integration or disintegration?
- Direct address to readers	dear reader
- Inclusive expressions	we all believe
- Personalisation	I do not want
- Asides	She seemed (ironically for Spencer) not of establishment.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

To obtain reliability of the data analysis, two inter-raters were employed to check the content of the news and the construction of the writing prompt items. Vague language and incorrect sentence structures were identified and revised, accordingly. Subsequently, the news and writing prompts were piloted on six final-year students. A reliability test was conducted to check the internal consistency of the writing prompt items. The Cronbach's alpha for the items of both sets of writing prompts were 0.714 and 0.783, respectively. Therefore, the writing prompt items were considered reliable, and they were then used in the study.

Prior to the data collection, consent was obtained from the participants of the study via consent forms. Then, four printed articles were given to the participants to read. Firstly, the participants were required to read News 1 and News 2. After reading the texts, the participants had to respond and indicate which text engaged them the most. The participants were then asked to answer the first set of given prompts. A similar procedure followed for News 3 and News 4 with the second set of writing prompts. All in, the session took about two hours, and

once the participants had responded to the prompts, the written responses were collected and analysed.

RESULTS

COMPARISON OF PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TOWARDS NEWS WITH TEXTUAL METADISCOURSE AND WITHOUT TEXTUAL METADISCOURSE

Table 2 shows the frequency of the participants' preferences on the news without textual metadiscourse (News 1) and with textual metadiscourse (News 2).

TABLE 2. Participants' preferences on News 1 and News 2

News	Frequency (%)
News 1	16.67
News 2	83.33
Total	100.00

Based on the participants' preferences, it is obvious that most of the participants preferred to read News 2 (83.33%), which is a text with textual metadiscourse. Only 16.67% of the participants preferred to read News 1, a text without metadiscourse.

This is not surprising as textual metadiscourse provides a more cohesive and logical flow to the text (Hyland, 2005), and this helps the readers to comprehend the text with ease. As stated by Student 1, News 2 had linking and transitional words such as *but, moreover* and *and*, which made the text coherent enough to attract the reader to continue reading it. She stated, "The paragraphs were separated logically, and according to the context. This separation was done through categories, and topics of information by using linking words 'but,' 'moreover' and 'and.'" The notion that the presence of metadiscourse provides cohesiveness to the text was agreed with by Student 16, who commented that News 2 was clearer due to the use of more discourse markers such as *since* and *however*.

Besides the logical flow of the text, it was also found that readers preferred news with textual metadiscourse because the ideas were sequenced with appropriate sequencers. The use of sequencers helps to make the text well-structured when reporting a sequence of events in the news. For example, from News 2, *firstly* and *secondly* were used to explain the sequence of requirements to ensure there are no more 1MDB issues in the future. Student 8, explained that sequencers guided her to follow the writer's train of thought from one point to another. She explained:

> News 2 is better because it has linking connectors such as "firstly" and "secondly" that make the text flow smoothly. I feel that News 1 is lacking some important information because there is no clear sequence of ideas in the news.

According to her, sequencers such as *firstly* and *secondly* had helped her to understand the chronological order of the presented ideas. However, she could not follow the points in News 1 due to the lack of vital linguistic signals. In sum, sequencers are vital pragmatic linguistic features used in a text to convey ideas chronologically and therefore, help to make reading more pleasurable, as claimed by another participant (Student 11).

Apart from that, the results also indicated that participants preferred news with clear topicalisers. Topicalisers are metadiscourse features that signal a shift of topic and the appropriate use of this feature would help readers to follow the flow of the news. For example, in News 2, the sixth paragraph was about the measures that should be taken by politicians to

encourage foreign investors in Malaysia. In paragraph seven, a topicaliser, "on the account of charges faced by Najib," was used at the beginning of the paragraph to indicate a topic shift about the wrongdoings of Najib, thus making the news more comprehensible. The topicaliser helped the readers to be aware of a topic shift in the text. This was also commented on by Student 20, who stated, "The writer used 'on the account of charges faced by Najib' *to explain a new topic* about the wrongdoings by Najib from the beginning to the end of a new topic within the news." The importance of the use of topicalisers was further agreed with by Student 24, who said, "News 2 had a clear topic sentence that explained a new topic clearly, compared to News 1, which only explained the points without mentioning the new topic in the news." It cannot be denied then that textual metadiscourse features such as topicalisers have an important role to play in the overall flow of the text.

Participants also agreed that News 2 was a better text than News 1 because of the use of examples that provided additional information. In Dafouz-Milne's (2008) model, examples are classified as code glosses. The response of Student 1 explains that:

> Examples are given to explain the information in the news. Word such as "like" is used to provide an explanation on measures to solve the 1MDB issue, while "Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad" is used to state Najib's former mentor's name clearly.

In other words, the participant felt that the use of code glosses enabled her to extract specific information, such as knowing who Goldman Sachs was and who Najib's former mentor was. Student 20 also agreed with Student 1 when she stated that although the text in News 2 was longer compared to News 1, the writer explained everything in detail, which subsequently assisted her in understanding the content easily.

In tandem with the rest of the textual metadiscourse features, announcements were found equally vital to effect the logical flow of the text. From News 2, the announcement (see Appendix, News 2, line 31) was used to explain subsequent points in the news to the readers. The importance of this metadiscourse feature was highlighted by Student 27, who said, "I was notified on what I could anticipate reading in the following sections or statements in News 2." She stated that announcements were used to provide a clearer picture for the readers on what they would be reading. Student 28 also illustrated that announcements helped in creating a better storyline to inform what would be happening next in the text to arouse interest among the readers. She went on to explain that if the writer did not use announcements correctly in the text, the readers would not be able to understand what was written, and it would be pointless for the readers to continue reading the text.

It is essential to note that although a large majority (83.33%) of the participants preferred text with metadiscourse, a small percentage (16.67%) of the participants preferred text without metadiscourse. Those who stated that they preferred News 1 generally agreed that the text was slightly shorter and more straightforward. Student 3 mentioned that "News 1 is more straight to the point. Perhaps, it is because the writer omits the conjunctions that are available in News 2." Besides that, Student 6 explained that "News 1 gets straight to the point. The writer reports the news in an objective way." Since reading is very much connected with writing, it is plausible that these participants were only concerned with the ideational proposition and not with the metadiscourse features that provided the voice of the writer.

To conclude, even though there was a small percentage of participants who preferred News 1, a greater number of participants preferred text with textual metadiscourse. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that textual metadiscourse does play a major role in the comprehension of a text.

COMPARISON OF PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TOWARDS NEWS WITH INTERPERSONAL

Table 3 reveals the participants' preferences on business news without interpersonal metadiscourse (News 3) and business news with interpersonal metadiscourse (News 4).

Table 3. Participants' preferences on News 3 and News 4

News	Frequency (%)
News 3	6.67
News 4	93.33
Total	100.00

The results revealed that 93.33% of the participants preferred to read News 4, while only 6.67% of the participants preferred to read News 3.

The majority of the participants preferred to read News 4 as it was more engaging to them. To engage the readers, it is important for the writers to demonstrate their credibility by using 'hedgy' words, particularly when making claims or stating an opinion. For instance, the use of hedges in News 4 helped the writer to withhold making a statement about women's potential and ability in the workplace. Student 2 explained that it is good to avoid using tentative words, but sometimes it is unavoidable. To illustrate, the use of hedges such as *suggests*, *may* and *quite* in News 4 helped the writer to mitigate the information concerning the need for gender diversity and fairer policies that would affect everyone in the workforce. Student 7 concurred by stating that the writer in News 4 used hedges to be less directive in expressing her ideas.

Participants who preferred text with interactional metadiscourse also highlighted the usage of certainty markers in the text. For instance, Student 15 pointed out that "News 4 contains definite facts of the workplace background. The use of certainty markers 'obviously,' 'certainly' and 'definitely' show that the writer was very certain of her ideas in the news." The use of certainty markers in News 4 reinforces the belief that a dire need exists for new policies in the workplace. This dire need for new polices to be implemented is due to the gender inequality and unfair polices in the workplace. Additionally, Student 17 preferred reading News 4 more than News 3 because there were certain words which made the news seem trustworthy. She mentioned that the certainty marker *certainly* was used in News 4 as a strong affirmation showing the need to create an awareness that gender diversity in the workforce is important.

Besides certainty markers, participants also identified the use of attributors in the text. Student 8 stated that she preferred the content in News 4 because there were references to the source of information in the news. For example, phrases such as "Grant Thornton Malaysia country managing partner Datuk NK Jasnani had said that" and "Fonterra Brands Malaysia's chilled division commercial director Chin Lee Foon tells FocusM that" were found in News 4. She stated that when she read News 4, she was able to focus on the statements made by these important people because it made the news more credible through the use of reliable facts and sources. This showed that the use of attributors, which provided the sources of information, made the text more convincing as they supported the ideas with evidence. Student 14 concurred by stating, "I think News 4 because they provide source from important people. In News 3, there isn't any." Student 15 also agreed by affirming, "I think News 4, because the content shows a sense of belonging than News 3, which is lighter."

Apart from attributors, the participants highlighted the use of attitude markers as a means of creating the interpersonal 'feel' of the text. For Student 29, she stated that News 4 was more engaging than News 3. The writer could express her feelings to ensure that she empathised with and was connected with the readers. She gave the example of *unfortunately* to show how the writer understood the readers' situation. She explained that "In News 4,

unfortunately was used. This is not uncertainty, but more to engage the reader. The writer is trying to let the readers feel the severity of the problem." However, regarding News 3, she mentioned that it only consisted of facts, and there was no attempt from the writer to engage the readers. Student 30 thought that emotions should also be conveyed, especially when the writer wants the readers to know about the need for the new policies in the workplace. She described that when the writer engaged her feelings in News 4 about women not holding high positions in companies, the readers would understand why an alarmingly small percentage of women leaders were in the workplace. She also explained that new policies need to be implemented to accommodate the demands of women in the workforce.

Additionally, most of the participants stated that News 4 was better at persuading the readers compared to News 3 through the use of commentaries. Student 25 mentioned that "News 4 has paragraphs like 'We....' It is like the writer is on the same page as the reader, not only from her own view, but with the readers as well." Student 25 believed that the writer placed herself in the readers' situation through the commentary employing *we*, which was found in the later part of the news. The *we* commentary was used to assure that all Malaysians, including the writer and readers, were prejudiced when it came to acknowledging women's potential and strengths in the workplace. From News 4, this prejudice was due to the narrow-minded thinking about women coming out from their comfort zone in securing a good job. The use of *we* showed the writer's solidarity with the readers. Student 27 also believed that through the use of a question in the commentary category (see Appendix, News 4, line 23)*,* the writer tried to connect with the readers by encouraging them to think about the gender diversity issue in the workplace. Therefore, the writer in News 4 attempted to create a rapport with the readers. The importance of the use of questions was also echoed by Student 28, who also found News 4 to be more engaging because there were questions raised in the news that stimulated the readers to think while reading the news. The use of questions assisted the readers in understanding the situation which was related to the ongoing phenomenon.

Although a great majority of the participants preferred news with interpersonal metadiscourse, a small number of participants (6.67%) indicated that they preferred News 3, which was without metadiscourse. Student 2, preferred News 3. She found that News 4 was hard for her to read as it was too lengthy. She stated:

> When I first scanned Business News 4, I thought it had many words. If I was lazy at the moment, I would read News 3. But if I had the time to read, Business News 4 is actually very detailed. At first sight, I really don't feel engaged to read News 4, but would rather read News 3.

Student 2 would read News 4 only when she had the time to read it, although she felt that News 4 had more details. From her first impression, she did not feel engaged when she read News 4. Student 19 agreed with Student 2 as she also preferred News 3 more than News 4. She felt that when she was reading News 4, she did not understand the news content because it was too lengthy with many quotations from important people. On the other hand, she explained that News 3 had more terms which she understood, and there was no inclusion of confusing names and companies, such as "Fonterra Brands Malaysia" and "Datuk NK Jasnani," which made the reading less stressful. Student 19 explained that "The writer of News 3 makes it easier for me to understand. The way the writer writes the news connects to me more. News 4 seems to be more like unplanned with the quotations from other people." It seems that Student 19 preferred to read news with main ideas instead of reading news with quotations from important people that make the news confusing. She stated that the news had a direct message meant to avoid confusing the readers.

Another interesting finding from the study was that two out of the five participants who preferred to read business news without textual metadiscourse (News 1) actually enjoyed reading news with interpersonal metadiscourse (News 4). According to Student 3, "News 4

uses the pronoun 'we' as an example that gives the readers a sense of belonging." Student 3 also explained that through the use of the pronoun *we*, News 4 connected with the readers by making them feel inclusive and subsequently, gave the readers an impact from this perceived involvement. Student 20 also mentioned that "there is a question in News 4. It makes me think when I read the question in the news on what I should do." Student 20 illustrated that the use of questions gets the readers involved in the news by creating a rapport with them. Student 3 and Student 20 concurred that they felt connected to News 4 through the use of attributors. They mentioned that they felt like they were getting reliable and trustworthy information from important people and resources. They also explained that the attributors made News 4 more interactive, and they had more pleasure reading it compared to News 3. It could be concluded that the two participants preferred to read news that was engaging to them. This result reveals that interpersonal metadiscourse does appeal to readers even if they do not care much for textual metadiscourse.

In short, the use of interpersonal metadiscourse is important for business news writings. The majority of responses from the readers who preferred news with interpersonal metadiscourse is testimony to this fact.

DISCUSSION

Based on the findings of this study, it is clear that most participants preferred texts with metadiscourse, regardless of whether it was textual or interpersonal metadiscourse. The text with textual metadiscourse provides a logical flow, and this aids comprehension of the text. This finding is supported by Camiciottoli's (2003) study in which text with the use of frame markers (or sequencers) was shown to contribute to better performance of students' in their comprehension ability.

Additionally, the notion that topicalisers make the text flow logically has been supported by Hashemi and Golparvar (2012), who stated that topicalisers are used to connect different pieces of information in a text to make the news more lucid and comprehensive. To put it simply, topicalisers are used to assist the reader in understanding the various topics in the news without having to re-read the news many times.

Text with appropriate use of code glosses also aids readers' comprehension of the text. Moghadam (2017) explained that examples given through the use of code glosses will help to provide more explicit reading cues for the readers. Dafouz-Milne's (2008) study also points to the importance of the use of code glosses, where it was found that Spanish newspapers had frequently employed this device to provide more information to the readers.

Apart from code glosses, the use of announcement features was also prevalent in business news writing. Oskouei (2011) noted that announcement features provide the readers a 'peek' at the forth coming argument. In other words, the use of announcement features may arouse the curiosity of the readers of an impending argument and thus render the text engaging to the readers.

While textual metadiscourse is concerned with the logical flow of the text, interpersonal metadiscourse is about the writers' involvement in the interpersonal relationship and interaction with the readers (Roslina, Chin, & Noli Maisarah, 2016). In this study, the results also revealed that the participants preferred text with interpersonal metadiscourse. One of the categories of interpersonal metadiscourse is hedges. Participants found the use of hedges in the text to be more engaging as the tone of the writing was less authoritative. The importance of the use of hedges in writing is also reflected in studies by Noorian and Biria (2010) and Dafouz-Milne (2008), where both studies demonstrated a dominant use of hedges. Furthermore, Camiciottoli's (2003) findings showed that text with the use of hedges helped students to

understand their reading better. Readers found a text with the use of hedges more endearing, thereby revealing the writer's sophistication of the craft of writing.

If hedges make a proposition tentative, certainty markers are employed to emphasise the accuracy of claims (Hyland, 2005). While having a high frequency of use of certainty markers in the news is beneficial, writers should also be cautious in not over-doing it as the over-use of certainty markers may make the writers come across as aggressive writers (Williams, 2007). Hyland (2005) recommended a 'judicious' use of both hedges and certainty markers to achieve the desired effect in the writing.

Participants also felt that the use of attributors gave the writers a stance of authority because they highlighted statements that were made by important people and from reliable sources (Oskouei, 2011). Biri's (2018) findings displayed that attributors helped to connect content to an outside source to signify the writers' involvement in the text. This implies the important role attributors play in the writing of business news as they help to strengthen the writers' arguments (Moghadam, 2017).

Apart from that, Bedu's (2019) study revealed that the use of attitude markers expressed the writers' affective attitudes in conveying surprise, obligation, agreement, and importance in the text. This ascertains that attitude markers are persuasive devices whose function is to express writers' affective values toward propositional content as they are applied differently in text (Farnia & Mohammadi, 2018).

The use of commentaries in creating rapport with the readers is supported in the study of Hashemi and Golparvar (2012), where they concurred that commentaries were used to establish the interaction between the writer and the readers. This creates solidarity between the writer and his/her readers, and in turn, the readers have a positive response to the text. Hyland (2005) stated that these devices (questions and first person pronoun *we*) include the readers in the discourse by maintaining the writer-reader relationship. It is no surprise then that participants of this study were in favour of the text with interpersonal metadiscourse.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, metadiscourse plays an important role in all types of writings, be they academic or media writings. The primary function of a written text is for reading; therefore, the close connection between writing and reading is well established in the findings of this study. Somehow the use of textual and interpersonal metadiscourse by writers has an effect on readers. The results revealed that the readers involved in the study responded positively to the business news writing with metadiscourse features.

Besides yielding interesting results, the study has a few pedagogical implications. First, the construction of texts with and without metadiscourse features could be used by writing instructors to enhance awareness of the need to use metadiscourse in writing, particularly in the writing of business news. Second, writing instructors, curriculum designers and text book writers could also benefit from the findings as the overwhelming positive responses from the student readers to news with textual and interpersonal metadiscourse reaffirm the need for such linguistic elements to be included in writing curricula and writing manuals. Finally, the revised version of Dafouz-Milne's (2008) model of metadiscourse categories could be used by future researchers who are passionate in researching the use of metadiscourse in writing, particularly in business news writing.

Even though the study has obtained insightful results, a larger sample of participants should be used in future studies so that the results can be generalised. It must be noted too that although the prompts were able to elicit meaningful information from the participants, they can be somewhat considered as contrived. Therefore, future studies may want to explore focus

group discussions as an alternative method to elicit the participants' responses to texts that are with or without metadiscourse features. Additionally, the selection of the students through intact sampling would also affect generalisability of the findings due to the occurrence of outliers. To overcome this weakness, perhaps future studies may want to focus on purposive sampling instead.

Nevertheless, in spite of these limitations, this study has achieved its key objective in establishing the fact that any writing, including business news, that is devoid of metadiscourse features would not be able to engage its readers. This notion has been highlighted from the readers' responses in the study, and thus it is safe to conclude that the inclusion of metadiscourse features in written text is integral to successful writing. It is a fact and not a myth then that texts with metadiscourse features are more engaging.

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APPENDIX

NEWS 1
1MDB trial is just the start of Malaysia War on graft
Wednesday, 4 Jul 2018
Joseph Chin

1   The 1MDB trial is just the start of Malaysia's war on graft. On
2   Wednesday, former Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak was charged
3   in connection with the $6 billion scandal. The swift action is
4   commendable. Deeper change is needed to reassure investors.
5
6   There are measures taken. The case follows Najib's dramatic election
7   defeat in May to his former mentor. Wednesday's charges mark a step in a
8   long process. Najib pleaded not guilty.
9
10   Footage of Najib jostling his way into court sends a message in a country
11   where the lines between business, politics and personal wealth have long
12   been blurred. If anything, Malaysia's 62nd place ranking in last year's
13   Corruption Perceptions Index understates the problem. Investigators have
14   gone straight for the top.
15
16   The net will be cast wide. Najib's wife and stepson have been questioned.
17   Authorities had issued an arrest warrant for Low Taek Jho.1MDB officials and
18   outside advisers will no doubt be quizzed. Najib has an incentive to help unpick
19   the mess. There is a deeper issue for Malaysia.
20
21   On the campaign trail, he railed against kleptocracy and cronyism.
22   Cleaning up after 1MDB is only the first part of that. Just as important will be to
23   set in place provisions to ensure there are no further 1MDBs.
24
25   Malaysia needs laws forcing politicians and senior civil servants to declare
26   their wealth, making it harder to amass inexplicable fortunes. The current
27   scandal should push through past objections. It benefits from clearer rules and
28   limits on funding for political parties. The current system makes it too easy
29   for lawmakers to demand dodgy donations. That helps make Kuala Lumpur
30   an attractive investment destination.
31
32   Malaysian authorities charged Najib with three counts of criminal breach
33   of trust and one count of using his position for gratification, as part of
34   an investigation into state fund 1Malaysia Development Berhad on July 4.
35   The charges relate to the transfer of 42 million ringgit from SRC International,
36   then a 1MDB unit, into Najib's personal account. The offences carry sentences
37   of between two and 20 years with possible fines.

(Adapted from 1MDB Trial is Just Start of Malaysian War on Graft, Business News,
The Star Online, Joseph Chin, 4 July 2018)

NEWS 2
1MDB trial is just the start of Malaysia War on graft
Wednesday, 4 Jul 2018
Joseph Chin

1   The 1MDB trial is just the start of Malaysia's war on graft. On
2   Wednesday, former Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak was charged
3   in connection with the $6 billion scandal. The swift action is commendable, and
4   deeper change is needed to reassure investors.
5
6   There are measures like forcing politicians to declare assets and
7   regulating party funding. The case follows Najib's dramatic election defeat in
8   May to his former mentor, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad. Wednesday's charges,
9   focused on a small former 1MDB unit, mark a step in a long process, but Najib
10   pleaded not guilty.
11
12   Footage of Najib jostling his way into court sends a message in a
13   country where the lines between business, politics and personal wealth have
14   long been blurred. If anything, Malaysia's 62nd place ranking in last year's
15   Corruption Perceptions Index understates the problem. Investigators have
16   gone straight for the top, which is encouraging for investors hoping Malaysia
17   can clean up.
18
19   The net will be cast wide. Najib's wife and stepson have been
20   questioned. Moreover, authorities had issued an arrest warrant for Low Taek
21   Jho, a financier also known as Jho Low.1MDB officials and outside advisers
22   like Goldman Sachs, who helped arrange bond sales, will no doubt be
23   quizzed. Najib, facing 20 years in jail, has an incentive to help unpick the
24   mess. There is a deeper issue for Malaysia: that of the personal vendetta by
25   Mahathir.
26
27   On the campaign trail, he railed against kleptocracy and cronyism.
28   Cleaning up after 1MDB is only the first part of that. Just as important will be
29   to set in place provisions to ensure there are no further 1MDBs.
30
31   Two provisions are keys which are discussed in the following
32   statements. Firstly, Malaysia needs laws forcing politicians and senior civil
33   servants to declare their wealth making it harder to amass inexplicable
34   fortunes. The current scandal should push through past objections.
35   Secondly, it benefits from clearer rules and limits on funding for political
36   parties, since the current system makes it too easy for lawmakers to demand
37   dodgy donations. That helps make Kuala Lumpur an attractive investment
38   destination.
39
40   On the account of charges faced by Najib, Malaysian authorities
41   charged Najib with three counts of criminal breach of trust and one count of
42   using his position for gratification, as part of an investigation into state fund
43   1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) on July 4. The charges relate to
44   the transfer of 42 million ringgit from SRC International, then a 1MDB unit,
45   into Najib's personal account. The offences carry sentences of between two
46   and 20 years with possible fines.

(Adapted from 1MDB Trial is Just Start of Malaysian War on Graft, Business News,
The Star Online, Joseph Chin, 4 July 2018)

NEWS 3

New policies needed for workplace
April 29-May 5 2017
Shalini Kumar

1   There has been a growing awareness of the need for gender diversity and
2   fairer policies in most workplaces to accommodate the rapidly changing face of the
3   workforce. Women have been the focus of several initiatives carried out by various
4   organisations, as well as by the government. The goal was not met, with the
5   number of women holding board positions on local public listed companies
6   totalling only 10.7% as at the end of 2015.
7
8   In a more recent survey conducted by Grant Thornton, Malaysia has the
10   lowest proportion of senior business roles held by women in Asean. Its findings
11   showed 24% of senior business roles are held by women this year, down from
12   26% last year and 34% of businesses have no women in senior management, up
13   from 31% last year. This is the second consecutive year Malaysia has had the
14   least number of women in senior roles.
        15
16   With the above statistics, it only indicates that the problem about women
17   in senior management is partially solved. This is a real concern for business
18   growth as the potential is not maximised. Companies today need to be more
19   productive, more innovative and in many ways more open if they are to grow.
20   Diversity will be key to their success.
21
22   One of the reasons for women not being able to progress has been pegged
23   to the presence of a "glass ceiling" in most workplaces, which prevents women
24   from progressing in their careers. Most women still think there is a glass ceiling
25   that is an unacknowledged barrier to advancement in a profession.
26
27   Women in their mind still think glass ceiling is real since many high level
28   positions are held by men today. However, that's not true in some places. There
29   are companies that encourage women to play an important role. Statistics have
30   shown that there are jobs that are sometimes given to men and sometimes are
31   offered with higher pay to men.
32
33   When it comes to promoting gender equity in workplaces, Malaysian
34   companies do more to ensure their female employees are being taken care of.
35   There is room for improvement for companies. It starts with the employer. The
36   business should see nurturing an equal gender workspace as important to
37   allow women to contribute as much as men. As a country, Malaysians can
38   prosper better and faster.
39
40   Malaysians tend to be myopic when it comes to analysing women's
41   potential. They see what's happening only at the top but not at the very root of
42   the problem. Chin hopes that more companies will realise that times have
43   changed.

(Adapted from New Policies Needed for Workplace, Mainstream, Focus Malaysia, Shalini Kumar, April 29-May 5 2017)

NEWS 4

New policies needed for workplace
April 29-May 5 2017
Shalini Kumar

1   There has certainly been a growing awareness of the need for gender
2   diversity and fairer policies in most workplaces to accommodate the rapidly
3   changing face of the workforce. Women have been the focus of several initiatives
4   carried out by various organisations, as well as by the government. Unfortunately,
5   the goal was not met, with the number of women holding board positions on local
6   public listed companies totalling only 10.7% as at the end of 2015.

8
9   In a more recent survey conducted by Grant Thornton, Malaysia has the
10 lowest proportion of senior business roles held by women in Asean. Its findings
11 showed 24% of senior business roles are held by women this year, down from
12 26% last year and 34% of businesses have no women in senior management, up
13 from 31% last year. Grant Thornton Malaysia country managing partner Datuk NK
14 Jasani had said that this is the second consecutive year Malaysia has had the
15 least number of women in senior roles.
        16
17   "With the above statistics, it only indicates that the problem about women
18 in senior management is partially solved. This is a real concern for business
19 growth. It suggests we aren't maximising the potential out there. Companies today
20 need to be more productive, more innovative and in many ways more open if they
21 are to grow. Diversity will be key to their success," he said.
        22
23   Why are women not being able to progress in the workplace? One of the
24 reasons for women not being able to progress has been pegged to the presence
25 of a "glass ceiling" in most workplaces, which prevents women from progressing in
26 their careers. Fonterra Brands Malaysia's chilled division commercial director Chin
27 Lee Foon tells FocusM that most women still think there is a glass ceiling that is
28 an unacknowledged barrier to advancement in a profession.
29
30   "Women in their mind may still think it's quite real, that a glass ceiling
31 exists. Many high level positions are held by men. However, that's not quite true
32 in some places. There are companies that encourage women to play an important
33 role. Obviously, there are statistics that show there are jobs that are sometimes
34 given to men and sometimes are offered with higher pay to men," she says.
35
36   Chin adds that when it comes to promoting gender equity in workplaces,
37 Malaysian companies could do more to ensure their female employees are being
38 taken care of.
39
40   "There is definitely room for improvement for companies. It starts with the
41 employer. The business should see nurturing an equal gender workspace as
42 important to allow women to contribute as much as men. As a country, we
43 can prosper better and faster," she says.
44
45   We tend to be myopic when it comes to analysing women's potential. We
46 see what's happening only at the top but not at the very root of the problem. Chin
47 hopes that more companies will realise that times have changed.

*(Adapted from New Policies Needed for Workplace, Mainstream, Focus Malaysia, Shalini
Kumar, April 29-May 5 2017)*